(d) whether his Ministry plans to open new teachers training institutions for teachers to teach such special children, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Data collected under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan so far, indicates that there are 20.14 lakh children with special needs in the 6—14 years age group.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) No, Sir. Facilities for training of teachers under the Central and State Governments are being utilized for the purpose.

Adhar Grihas under Swadhar Scheme

†2023. SHRI VASANT CHAVAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether 'Adhar Grihas' constructed under 'Swadhar' Scheme have since been closed;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of such 'Adhar Grihas' in the country, whether Government realize that their number is not sufficient;

(d) whether Government propose to construct more 'Adhar Grihas' in the rural areas;

(e) whether HIV positive women and mentally retarded women are kept together with all the other women in the "Adhar Grihas"; and

(f) whether Government feel that HIV positive women and mentally retarded women need special attention?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. No homes constructed under 'Swadhar Scheme' have been closed.

(c) Under the Short Stay Home Scheme which was launched in the year 1969, 342 Short Stay Homes are functioning throughout the country as on 31.3.2005. In addition, the Swadhar Scheme was launched in the year 2001-2002. So far, 118 Shelter Homes have been sanctioned under Swadhar Scheme. The Government's aim is to spread the scheme horizontally throughout the country and open at least one Shelter Home in each district of the country. Steps are being taken to achieve the same.

(d) Yes, Sir.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Yes, Sir. Under Swadhar Scheme, the Government has instructed that mentally challenged, the trafficked women and the HIV/AIDS victims may be segregated in separate enclosures which would not only lead to better management of the Swadhar Shelter Home but also help the management to take proper care of the mentally challenged and HIV/AIDS victims.

Making SSC exam optional

†2024. SHRI VASANT CHAVAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from NCERT regarding making the examination of SSC optional;

(b) if so, the details thereof and whether Government are considering to implement this proposal;

(c) whether Government are considering to make the existing examination for tenth class optional and make it mandatory for all States; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) and (c) No, Sir.

(b) and (d) Do not arise.

School drop-out rates

2025. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether school drop-out rate has considerably come down in Punjab, Delhi, Chandigarh and different States and Union Territories during the last three years;

(b) if so, the comparative drop-out rates for boys and girls in different States and UTs during 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05; and

(c) the special Central aid, if any, given to the different States to achieve this object?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) and (b) State/UT wise, gender-wise drop-out rates for 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 are at Statement I, II & III (*See* below).

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.